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Sen. Allen's legislation to protect students passed by Senate

LANSING – Parents of special education students will be more at ease with the people helping educate their children under legislation implementing criminal background checks of paraprofessional job applicants, which overwhelmingly passed the Michigan State Senate today, announced Sen. Jason Allen, R-Traverse City.

Introduced by Allen, Senate Bill 247 requires a school district, intermediate school district, school academy or nonpublic school perform a criminal background check of applicants for jobs that provide special education services to students.

“Parents should not have to worry about the safety of their children while they are in school,” Allen said. “Parents have a right to know that their children, particularly those with added needs, can learn in a safe, positive environment. This legislation will help prevent predators from preying on our children in special education programs.”

The legislation was prompted by situations in Allen's district where an individual with a prior criminal record was able to obtain employment as a paraprofessional working in special education.

“The situations that have occurred in northern Michigan are deplorable,” Allen said. “By requiring both state and federal background checks of these employees, the predators that lurk in our society will be ousted before they can take advantage of our children again.”

The background checks required for special education paraprofessionals under the proposed legislation are the same as currently required before hiring a teacher or school administrator.

SB 247 now heads to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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